

Cultural Understanding Module

Rationale: This series of lessons is intended to broaden student understanding of how to approach world cultures. It aims to develop open-mindedness as students are challenged to differentiate between observations and judgments as well as the visible and hidden aspects of culture. This lesson also serves to lay the groundwork for better understanding global conflicts by being prepared for understanding different perspectives.

Day 1 – What would you do?

Objectives: Students will identify ways in which our cultural background influences our judgments.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.D

Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

Materials: Each student will need a copy of “What would you do?” and “What would you do NOW?” worksheets (courtesy of <http://www.afsusa.org/educators/teachers-toolbox/>)

Time: One 45-minute class period.

Procedures:

Engage – Begin by distributing the “What would you do?” worksheet. Instruct students to read each example and for each situation write one sentence of how they would react. What would they say, think, or do?

Explore – Ask students to get in groups of 2 or 3 and discuss which of these items they felt most strongly about. Each student should get approximate 30 seconds to share and partners should practice active listening by making eye contact. When finished, the partners may respond by saying what they might do in that situation before sharing their own.

Explain – Allow groups to share out. During this time get a feel for whether or not students mostly agree or disagree with each other’s reactions. Explain that most of our reactions are shaped by our expectations of a situation based on what we are most familiar with. Explain that

there is a key piece of missing information in each situation that might cause many people to act, think, or feel much differently about the situation.

Elaborate – Distribute the “What would you do NOW?” worksheet allowing groups time to discuss each item and to explain new answers of how they would react (think, feel, or do) now. Again, allow groups to share out focusing on how the new context changes our reactions to the situation.

Evaluate – Ask students to think about the purpose of the activity and how it might change how they view unfamiliar people or situations in the future. Students should then complete an exit ticket completing the following prompt: “I used to think..., but now I think...”

Assessment: The exit ticket as well as student discussions throughout the lesson can serve as an informal assessment of whether or not students understood the purpose of the lesson.

Day 2 – The Cultural Iceberg

Objectives: Students will be able to categorize the visible and hidden aspects of culture by creating a cultural iceberg graphic organizer.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

Materials: Each student will need a few-post-it notes and a copy of the Cultural Iceberg graphic organizer.

Time: One 45-minute class period.

Procedures:

Engage – Ask students to write or illustrate on post-it notes: what do you think of when you hear the word culture? Students can post responses on whiteboard. When finished, have a volunteer read out a few of the responses. Explain that we will return to these at the end of the lesson.

Explore – In order to further get a sense of what culture is and means, group students by into 2s or 3s and distribute each one of the quotes from the “Quotes on Culture” worksheet. One

student should read the quote and another should say what it means to them. Explain that for 5-10 minutes students should mingle around the classroom and trade quotes with another group. After each trade, one student should read the quote aloud and another student explains what it means to them. When finished, allow a few groups to share out their favorite quote from the activity.

Explain – Distribute the “Cultural Iceberg” worksheet and read aloud the following definition of culture “The values, beliefs and ways of life of a group of people. Culture shapes the way we live, think, and act.” Ask students to think about how these quotes and this definition might relate to yesterday’s “What would you do?” activity. Discuss how our culture shapes how we think about certain situations, but that what we see is not always enough to entirely understand someone’s culture.

Elaborate – Explain that students have a blank organizer shaped like an iceberg and ask them to describe an iceberg focusing on how most of it is hidden below the water’s surface. Explain that this is how culture is – only certain parts are visible but most of what makes up culture is a set of values and expectations of a society. Ask students to revisit the post-it notes from the beginning of class and categorize them as visible or hidden. They should physically move the post-it’s above a line or below it and explain why they chose that. As they work, display the Cultural Iceberg reference from <http://www.janinesmusicroom.com/the-rest-of-the-iceberg.html> for additional ideas. Students can take notes in order to create their very own Cultural Iceberg on their worksheet.

Evaluate – As an exit ticket ask students to complete the following prompts: “Culture is like an iceberg because...but...so...”

Assessment: The exit ticket can be used to assess student learning. Additionally, the teacher can ask students to complete a cultural iceberg about themselves or a culture they identify with. Another idea is to display images or a short text, or use background knowledge, about a foreign culture and ask students to complete a cultural iceberg of notes. Lastly, the Nacirema lesson (<https://mrwinandsclass.wikispaces.com/file/view/Nacirema+Lesson.pdf>) can also be a fun and engaging way to extend learning and have students think critically about cultures.

Quotes on Culture

“Culture is the arts elevated to a set of beliefs.”

– Thomas Wolfe

“A nation’s culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

“Our culture, language, history, and values are vital to uniting us as a nation.”

– Bobby Jindal

“The beauty of the world lies in the diversity of its people.”

– Unknown

“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.”

– Marcus Garvey

“Culture makes people understand each other better. And if they understand each other better in their soul, it is easier to overcome the economic and political barriers.”

–Paulo Coelho

“Without memory, there is no culture. Without memory, there would be no civilization, no society, no future.”

– Elie Wiesel

“Creativity is putting your imagination to work, and it’s produced the most extraordinary results in human culture.”

–Ken Robinson

“Preservation of one’s own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures.”

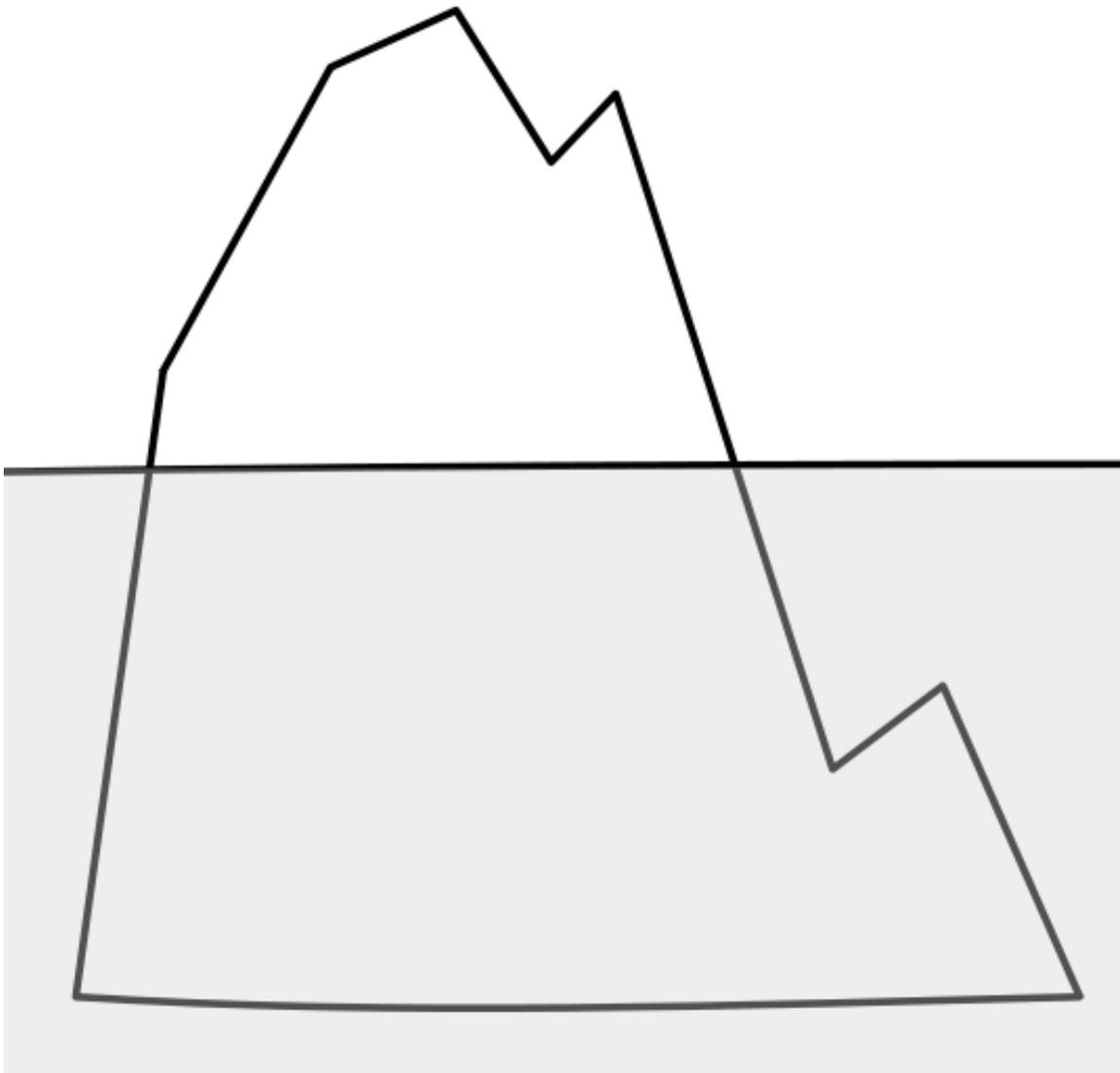
– Cesar Chavez

“Debate and divergence of views can only enrich our history and culture.”

– Ibrahim Babangida

Cultural Iceberg

Culture: The values, beliefs and ways of life of a group of people.
Culture shapes the way we live, think, and act.



What Would You Do?

1. You see a group of teenage boys throwing rocks at a dog.

Your response: _____

2. You see a mother struggle with her three small children while the man she is with does nothing.

Your response: _____

3. Your brother snaps his fingers several times at you to get your attention.

Your response: _____

4. You see a neighbor and he makes the OK gesture to you.

Your response: _____

5. You see a couple holding hands while they are walking down the street.

Your response: _____

6. A guest belches loudly at the table after dinner.

Your response: _____

7. Your friend agrees to meet you at a cafe' at 4 p.m., and it is now 5 p.m.

Your response: _____

8. You are told that you are getting fat.

Your response: _____

9. You are introduced to a woman and she offers you her wrist to shake.

Your response: _____

10. Your neighbor knocks on your door and asks to borrow something.

Your response: _____

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This resource was developed by teachers participating in the 2015-2016 USIPeace Teachers program of the Global Peacebuilding Center at the U.S. Institute of Peace. The content of this resource reflects the views of its author alone, and is not intended to reflect the views and work of the U.S. Institute of Peace. For the electronic version and additional information, visit www.buildingpeace.org/peace-teachers.

What Would You Do Now?

1. You see a group of teenage boys throwing rocks at a dog.
Your response if you were from a country where dogs carry rabies and are often wild:

2. You see a mother struggle with her three small children while the man she is with does nothing.
Your response if you came from a culture with strictly defined gender roles:

3. Your brother snaps his fingers several times at you to get your attention.
Your response if you came from a culture where snapping is considered an appropriate way to call for someone:

4. You see a former classmate and he makes the OK gesture to you.
Your response if you came from a culture where this gesture is obscene:

5. You see a couple holding hands while they are walking down the street.
Your response if you came from a culture where this is considered very promiscuous:

6. A guest belches loudly at the table after dinner.
Your response if you came from a culture where this is a way to show the host(ess) that the food was good:

7. Your friend agrees to meet you at a cafe' at 4 p.m. and it is now 5.
Your response if you came from a culture where time and dates are flexible:

8. You are told that you are getting fat.
Your response if you came from a culture where this is a compliment:

9. Someone offers you their wrist to shake.
Your response if you came from a culture where this is polite behavior from someone when her hands are dirty or she has been recently working with them:

10. Your neighbor knocks on your door and asks to borrow something.
Your response if you come from a culture where long greetings and inquiries about family members is the rule prior to "getting to the point":

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